



Daily Highlights

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W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- * As General Assembly concludes general debate, Democratic People's Republic of Korea stresses need for new Korean peace arrangement with United States.
- * UNPROFOR Chief of Mission continues efforts to secure implementation of cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- * Security Council approves Secretary-General's arrangements for remainder of current UNCRO mandate; notes negotiations on Eastern Slavonia are ongoing.
- * MINUGUA says Guatemalan soldiers violated right to life by intentionally firing on civilians in returnee community on 5 October.
- * Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, in message for Natural Disaster Reduction Day, calls for more investment in local capacities to prevent disasters.
- * Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs concludes latest round of talks with Foreign Minister of Myanmar.
- * Changes in world economic structure require new strategy for development, Japan tells Economic and Financial Committee.
- * United Nations to hold two-day Conference on Public Administration and Social Development in Stockholm next week.

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The top priority on any agenda for peace, security and national reconciliation on the Korean peninsula must be the establishment of a new peace arrangement, according to the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Choi Su Hon. Speaking on the last day of the General Assembly's general debate, he said the outdated system of the Korean armistice should be replaced with an arrangement between his country and the United States, which was primarily responsible for peace on the peninsula. That could not be delayed any longer in view of the trend towards

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peace and detente and in the context of the Agreed Framework between the two countries.

Once legal and institutional mechanisms for such a peace agreement were in place, the tension on the Korean peninsula would be defused dramatically, the Vice-Minister continued. That, in turn, would facilitate smooth implementation of the inter-Korean agreement and help stabilize the situation in North-East Asia and the Pacific. When the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States worked together with mutual trust, they could resolve remaining issues. That had been proved by the resolution of the so-called "nuclear issue" on the Korean peninsula, about which the world community had once been deeply concerned.

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A United Nations spokesman today expressed hope that the cease-fire recently agreed to by the Bosnian parties would soon come into effect. The Bosnian Government had indicated that it was prepared to issue orders for the cease-fire to start one minute after midnight. However, the Bosnian Serbs -- who had been prepared to issue cease-fire orders for the last two nights -- said they needed time to check arrangements. The Chief of Mission of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Antonio Pedauye, met with the Serbs in Pale today.

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The Security Council has approved the Secretary-General's arrangements for the remainder of the current mandate of the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) pending, in the case of Eastern Slavonia, the outcome of the ongoing negotiations on the subject.

In a report dated 29 September, the Secretary-General set out six main tasks for UNCRO, most of which had been identified in resolution 981 (1995): performing the functions envisaged in the 1994 Cease-fire Agreement between Croatia and the Serb authorities in Sector East; facilitating the implementation of relevant sections of the 1994 Economic Agreement; facilitating the implementation of relevant Council resolutions; monitoring the border between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at crossings in Sector East; monitoring the demilitarization of the Prevlaka peninsula; and reporting on military incidents in the vicinity of the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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The United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) has drawn preliminary conclusions from its investigation into an incident on 5 October which left 11 civilians dead and more than 30 injured. It determined that a patrol of 26 Guatemalan soldiers had seriously violated the right to life by intentionally firing upon members of a returnee

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community in the Alta Verapaz region. There was no evidence that the members of the community were armed.

MINUGUA said the response to the incident of the former Guatemalan Defence Minister -- justifying the action and exonerating those responsible for it -- must be corrected by the new authorities in the Ministry. If not corrected, the response would constitute a serious obstacle to the State's obligation to investigate the incident and punish those responsible.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen, today called for more investment in local capacities to prevent disasters. In a statement on the occasion of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, he said individuals and communities all over the world had enormous potential to provide protection from disasters. He noted that the theme of this year's Day was "Women and Children -- Key to Prevention".

The General Assembly had proclaimed the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-2000) to provide a framework for pulling together scientific knowledge and technical know-how, Mr. Hansen continued. Proper planning, prevention and preparation benefitted individuals, communities and national economies. The best emergency management was when a disaster was avoided.

Mr. Hansen urged donors to support the efforts of disaster-prone developing countries and United Nations programmes for disaster reduction. He called attention to the "indispensable bridge" between disaster management, natural resource protection and sustainable development.

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The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Alvaro de Soto, met yesterday at Headquarters with the Foreign Minister of Myanmar, U Ohn Gyaw. Their discussions focused on the main issues reflected in General Assembly resolution 49/197, which gave the Secretary-General his mandate in relation to Myanmar. As requested by the resolution, a report to the Assembly is being prepared.

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The economic structure of the world has been changing and a new strategy for development will have to be pursued on that basis, the representative of Japan told the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) yesterday. As the Committee continued its debate on the world economic situation, he said the Japanese Government would be prepared to increase its official development assistance and contributions to the United Nations system if the Organization's development activities became more effective.

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The representative of Thailand said that some Member States saw the United Nations as an instrument that served their own national policies, and tended to focus their attention on questions of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Others saw the United Nations as the only viable global organization, whose resources could be better used to fill the gap in what was required for national development. The United Nations could be both, he stressed, as the two requirements were not mutually exclusive.

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The United Nations will hold a two-day Conference on Public Administration and Social Development in Stockholm, Sweden, next week. Organized with the support of the Swedish Government, the Conference is part of the follow-up to last March's World Summit for Social Development. It is being held in preparation for a meeting on Public Administration and Development during a resumed session of the General Assembly in New York next April.

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